

REMARKS

Claims 1, 3-7, 9-11, 13-15, and 17-22 are currently pending in the present application, with Claim 12 being canceled, and Claims 1, 11, 13, 15, and 17-19 being amended by this instant Amendment. Reconsideration and reexamination of the claims are respectfully requested.

The Examiner rejected Claims 1, 3-7, 9-14, and 20-22 under 35 U.S.C. 101 as being directed to a non-statutory subject matter. Applicants traverse the rejection in that Claims 1 and 11 are directed to processes that transform signals to a different state. However, in an effort to advance the prosecution of the present application, Applicants have amended Claims 1 and 11 to further clarify that the processes are executed by an apparatus, hence establishing an additional statutory category of tying a process to the statutory category of a particular apparatus. Applicants therefore submit that all of the claims of the present applications are thus compliant with 35 U.S.C. 101.

The Examiner rejected Claims 1, 11, 15, and 19 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Bizjak (U.S. Patent No. 7,212,640) in view of Suzuki (U.S. Patent No. 5,054,077). This rejection is respectfully traversed with respect to the amended claims.

As previously communicated, and again repeated herein for the Examiner's reference, the present invention is directed to a method of adjusting levels of amplifiers in a multi-input channel audio system. Specifically, the recited method allows a user to separates the multi-channels into one or more groups of channels so as to provide the ability to process certain channels while isolating certain other channels from the processing. Each group is analyzed to detect a maximal signal level (from one of the input channels), and, in accordance with the detected maximal signal level, appropriate amplification gain of the input audio signals for that group is adjusted.

As also previously explained, the amplification gain as recited in the claims corresponds to the multiplier signal as disclosed in the specification (*see, e.g.*, paragraph [0061] of the published application (U.S. Patent Pub. No. 2004/0008851 A1) providing that numeral “70” denotes a gain control unit that determines a multiplier gain (i.e., a multiplier signal) using the maximum value as an input level according to a characteristic curve such as shown in Fig. 4).

As also previously communicated, the independent claims specify that the three or more channels of audio signals, as previously recited in the preamble and now amended to be recited within the body of the claims per the Examiner’s suggestion, constitute a set of surround signals in a surround system. Again, according to the present invention as recited in the claims, should the groups arrangement process arranges plural channels into plural groups, the groupings of the channels are different as between any given two of the grouping types. To refresh the Examiner’s recollection, the above-aspect of the present invention as claimed is disclosed, *inter alia*, at paragraph [0024] of the published publication of the present application. For instance, as described in paragraph [0024], KEY_LINK1, KEY_LINK2, KEY_LINK3, and KEY_LINK4 correspond to different grouping types (as specifically recited in Claims 3, 4, 5, and 6, respectively. In particular, KEY_LINK1 is a grouping of all of the 5.1 channels (i.e., L+R+LS+RS+C+LFE), KEY_LINK2 groups together all of the channels except the LFE channel, KEY_LINK3 groups together the front channels (i.e., L+R+C) for one subgroup and the rear channels (LS+RS) for another subgroup, and KEY_LINK4 isolated the center channel and groups the front and rear stereo channels into two separate subgroups. Dividing the surround channel signals into different groups according to grouping types provide the flexibility of selectively control the gain of a desired set of channels, such as the center channel, the front channels, the rear surround channels, etc. Again, as previously

submitted, Bizjak does not contain any disclosure or suggestion of a group arrangement section that arranges the plural audio channels into two or more groups according to the selected grouping type, such that the groupings of the channels are different as between any given two of the grouping types (as recited in the amended claims). Applicants further submit that Suzuki fails to make up for the deficiencies of Bizjak in that, while Suzuki discloses setting of groups having plural channels, Suzuki does not teach or suggest that “a set of surround signals” is divided into groups according to the selected grouping type.

Finally, and more importantly, Applicants have further amended the independent claims to incorporate the subject matter of previously pending Claim 12 into all of the independent claims. The Examiner has indicated, at page 3 of the Detailed Action, that Claim 12 (along with Claims 3-6, 9, 10, 13, 14, 18, and 20-22) were objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. In view of Applicants’ amendment of the independent claims to include the subject matter of Claim 12, Applicants submit that all of the claims are thus in condition for allowance.

In view of the above, Applicants respectfully submit that Claims 1, 11, 15, and 19 are not obvious in view of Bizjak and Suzuki.

The Examiner rejected Claim 17 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Bizjak in view of Wiser et al. (U.S. Patent No. 7,363,093). This rejection is respectfully traversed with respect to the amended claim.

Claims 17 has also been amended to incorporate the allowable subject matter of previously pending Claim 12, and is therefore submitted as in condition for allowance for reasons similar to

above. Again, none of Bizjak, Suzuki, or Wiser contain any disclosure or suggestion of grouping of surround audio channels in the manner recited by Claim 17. Nor do any of the references contain teachings or suggestions of the subject matter incorporated from previously pending Claim 12.

In view of the above, Applicant submits that each of the presently pending claims of the present application is believed to be in condition for allowance. The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned attorney at anytime with any further questions or clarifications regarding the claimed subject matter.

In the unlikely event that the transmittal letter is separated from this document and the Patent Office determines that an extension and/or other relief is required, Applicant petitions for any required relief including extensions of time and authorizes the Assistant Commissioner to charge the cost of such petitions and/or other fees due in connection with the filing of this document to Deposit Account No. 03-1952 referencing docket no. 393032038900. However, the Assistant Commissioner is not authorized to charge the cost of the issue fee to the Deposit Account.

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